REMARKS/ARGUMENT

Regarding the Claims in General:

Claims 1-6 remain pending. Claim 1 has been amended to address the outstanding rejections, and to improve the form thereof. It has also been reformatted for added clarity. Claim 7 has been canceled without prejudice. Claims 2-6 are unchanged.

Regarding the Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112:

This rejection appears to be based on a purported omission from claim 1 of a recitation of an "inner end" of the claimed rim to support the recitation of "said inner end" in lines 16 and 17. In response, the Examiner's attention is respectfully directed to line 13 of claim 1 in its original form in which "an inner end" of the rim was positively recited. This recitation now appears in line 10. Some of the formal amendments to claim 1 further emphasize this feature of the ring as well. Withdrawal of the rejection is accordingly requested.

Regarding the Prior Art Rejections:

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 1-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as anticipated by Gélinas et al. U.S. Patent 6,817,362 (Gélinas). As amended, claim 1 more clearly emphasizes features which distinguish the invention from Gélinas. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are accordingly requested.

In particular, claim 1, as amended, highlights that: (a) the mask body (2) is aligned with the bent sheet (1) in a transverse direction relative to the face of the wearer, (b) the inner and outer ends (213, 214) of the rim (21) are opposite to each in the transverse direction, so the rim extends forwardly from the wearer's face, (c) the outer end of the rim is covered by the central portion of the bent sheet, (d) the filter sheet extends outwardly from an exterior of the rim, (e) the filter sheet (22) is covered by the bent sheet, (f) a gap (26) extends outwardly of the chamber (20) from the exterior of the rim, and (g) an aperture (212) formed in the rim is disposed between and is spaced apart from the inner and outer ends of the rim.

The open end of gap (26) defined by peripheral edges of the bent sheet and the filter sheet is best shown in Fig. 3. Since the entire bent sheet, which covers the outer end of the rim, is air impermeable, ambient air cannot enter into the chamber (20) axially, i.e. through an opening defined

by the outer end (214) of the rim, but only *tangentially* through the gap (26) and the aperture. This is highlighted in claim 1 by the recitation:

> said filter sheet cooperating with said bent sheet to define a gap therebetween,
>
> said gap extending outwardly of said chamber from the exterior of said rim and being in fluid communication with said chamber through said filter sheet and said aperture.

With the claimed construction, flow of ambient air in a direction *along* the contour of the gap (26) is established during breathing, while flow of ambient air directly toward the face of the wearer is prevented. Thus, the claimed mask is effective in blocking an airborne virus when the wearer confronts a person who is infected with the virus.

In contrast, Gélinas discloses a mask including a face piece (22) with first and second parts (90, 92), a filter (12) covering the second part (92), and a cover (24) for securing the filter (12) on the second part (92). The cover has a flange portion (18) that is formed on the peripheral edge thereof and that compresses sealingly against a continuous surface (27) formed on a peripheral edge of the second part (92), thereby forming an airtight seal between the face piece (22) and the filter (12).

Here, breathing apertures (30) are formed in an end wall of an outer end of the second part (92) and thus are disposed in an axial direction relative to the second part, and the cover (24) is configured to permit ambient air to pass through holes in the cover, through the filter and then through the apertures (30) in the end wall of the second part (92) (see Figs. 2 to 5 and Fig. 7, and column 4, lines 45 to 50). Hence, the flow of ambient air is from *in front of* the face of the wearer, rather than tangentially, as in claim 1. Gélinas is accordingly less likely to be effective in blocking the airborne virus than the mask of this invention.

There is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion in Gélinas of any structure corresponding to or similar to gap (26) of claim 1 which allows for tangential flow. Claim 1, and its dependent claims 2-6 should accordingly be allowed.

In view of the foregoing, favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully solicited.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being transmitted by Facsimile to (571) 273-8300 addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on the date indicated below.

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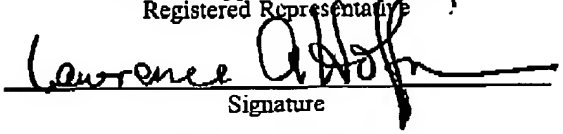

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November 22, 2005
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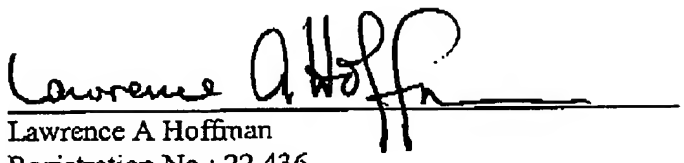
Respectfully submitted,



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